

(organ music)

Pastor: It is a great and thrilling thing to praise our maker for his truth, for his holiness and his love. But in so doing, we become aware of our lack of greatness at all these points, and of our need for relying upon the forgiveness of God made available to us through his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, may we therefore be seated and join together our hearts and voices in singing our confession of reliance upon Jesus. ♪ Lo, the Good Shepherd ♪ ♪ For the sheep is offered ♪ ♪ The slave hath sinned ♪ ♪ And the Son hath suffered ♪ ♪ For our atonement ♪ ♪ While we nothing heeded ♪ ♪ God interceded ♪ ♪ For me kind Jesus ♪ ♪ Was thy incarnation ♪ ♪ Thy mortal sorrow ♪ ♪ And thy life's oblation ♪ ♪ Thy death of anguish ♪ ♪ And thy bitter passion ♪ ♪ For my salvation ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

Pastor: The love that let us hear these comforting words of assurance, Jesus Christ, our God own son, for us to Earth descended and all our sin has he atoned. And so death's rule has ended, all death's power here below is now avain, an empty show, his sting is lost forever. Hallelujah, Amen. (gentle organ music) The gospel is made known and is celebrated in a wide variety of ways through the reading of the gospels, through the preaching of the gospel, through the singing of hymns, of anthems through organ music, other instrumental music, through art and architecture. In recognition of this, Dr. Rudolph Kramer will play an organ concert in the chapel next Sunday afternoon. Dr. Kramer, as you will remember, was for two years, our chapel organist, he is Head of Organ at the University of North Carolina. I call this to your attention because there was as an announcement erroneously printed in yesterday's Durham's Sun, that he would play today. He will not play here today, but he will play next Sunday. Trust the announcement that you find printed in today's chapel bulletin, not the one in yesterday's newspaper. Now I'm not giving that to you as a general principle, because we are as capable of making errors as anyone else. But in this specific instance, trust the chapel bulletin rather than the newspaper, thank you.

Man: The scripture lesson this morning is found in the second, the book, the second book of Samuel, the second chapter, it concerns David's succession to the throne of Israel, the translation is by Moffatt. We begin to read from the eighth verse. "Now Abner, the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Saul's son Ishbel, across the Mahanaim, where he made him king over Gilead, the Asherites, Jezreel, Ephraim and Benjamin. In fact, over all Israel, only the house of Judah adhered to David, then Abner the son of Ner and the adherence of Ishbel, the son of Saul, marched from Mahanaim nine to Gibeon. Joab, the son of Zeruiah and David's adherence, also marched out and met them at the reservoir at Gibeon. That day, the fight that followed was most fierce, but Abner, the son of Ner and the men of Israel were beaten by the adherence of David. Zeruiah's three sons were there, Joab, Abushai and Asahel, Asahel was swift-footed as a wild deer. So Asahel chased Abner, and as he ran, he turned neither to left nor right in his pursuit of Abner, then Abner glanced behind him and said, 'Is that you, Asahel?' 'Yes.' He answered. So Abner said to him, 'Turn to your left or turn to your right, catch one of the young men and take his spoil.' But Asahel would not turn aside from his chase. Then Abner's said again to Asahel, 'Turn aside from following me, why should I strike you

down? How could I look your brother Joab in the face after that?' But he would not turn aside. And so Abner gave him a backwards stroke in the belly. The spear came out of his back and he dropped dead on the spot. All before noon, Abner and his men made their way through the wadi of Araba, crossing the Jordan and passing right through the ravine until they had reached Mahanaim. As for Joab, he returned from his pursuit of Abner. When he had mustered all the troops, 19 of David's adherence were missing, besides Asahel, Asahel they lifted and buried him in his father's grave in Bethlehem." Let us pray that God will bless to us the understanding of this scripture, Amen. ♪ Glory be to the Father ♪ ♪ And to the Son ♪ ♪ And to the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ As it was in the beginning ♪ ♪ Is now and ever shall be ♪ ♪ World without end ♪ ♪ Amen, Amen ♪

- The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And with your spirit.

- Let us pray. Almighty God, by whose wisdom the earth was founded and the heavens established, thou has taught us that wisdom is more precious than rubies. That it is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it. We therefore gather here and do now pause to give thee thanks that the founders of thy church and of this university fulfill their obligation to impart the treasures of faith and knowledge to succeeding generations, and that they gave us a place where by searching, wisdom and faith may be found. We thank thee that by their planning and sacrifice, we have come into a great inheritance of truth. Enable us, we pray thee, to guard and to expand this blessing. We offer our gratitude that we were born into a generation, which has a great and challenging responsibility. We are thankful, oh God, that the times call out the best that is in us and will not allow us to be complacent. We blessed thee that before this world was ours, it belonged to thee, that before the responsibilities of this university were upon our shoulders, thou didst love it and care for it. And that even now the administrators, the faculty and the students here are more truly thy children than they are any of ours. For thy divine companionship in this endeavor, we are profoundly grateful, and so God, we offer our prayers of intercession for students everywhere that they may have grace to learn both facts and wisdom, to learn about life and to learn to live, as they achieve their own individuality, their own separate personhood, grant them the grace to rebel without becoming rebellious, that they may be able to handle skepticism fully, without becoming paranoid. That they may have good judgment to hear all voices, without becoming the slaves of any. Grant that they may choose just one master, Jesus. We offer, oh God, also our prayers for administrators, that they may be given the grace of wisdom in the midst of confusion, the grace of patience under continual annoyance, the grace of independence in a network of interrelatedness. The grace to wait while immature people grope for maturity, give them the understanding which is necessary to accept the misunderstanding of the public, give them skill in attracting necessary financial support, and success in maintaining academic freedom. Give them strength in defending the university against both the anarchists and the bigots, and oh God grant them that degree of human and divine support without which no individual can endure. Oh God who art the judge of all, who knowest what is in man and requires truth. We pray on behalf of all our fellows, not simply those here at the university, hear us as we pray for the poor and the ignorant, the friendless and the lonely. Those who are tempted, those who are unbelieving, be merciful to those who had counted on being in happier circumstances than they are this morning. Soothe their disappointment and help them to understand it. Grant strength to those who carry a cross of suffering. Be thou the strong arm of those in danger. We pray thee, to pour out thy spirit

upon all of us, that we may learn how to have clean laughter and good sportsmanship, that we may know how to be happy as well as to follow duty. May we be simple in purpose and noble in achievement and oh God, as we are so often impressed with our failures and with our inability to measure up to the challenge of the day, keep us openly mindful of our need to rely upon thee, so that in our weakness we may be strong through thy strength. Give us the capacity to love our fellows, for all of us need to receive and to give love. And without it, we are sick. Do thou make us whole, we pray for grace to love beyond the circle of our friends, our teammates, our fraternity brothers, those who see things as we do and agree with us and compliment us, help us to love the unlovely. Even as we who are unlovely have been loved. Oh thou who doest send rain and sunshine upon the just, and the unjust, send thy spirit into our hearts. That we may love as thou dost love. We pray in the name of him who revealed this love to us, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, in order that we may capture more of his spirit, we use the words, oh God, which he has taught us to use in prayer to thee, saying, Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

Man: The peace of God be with you and with all the people of God. Let us place in juxtaposition two stories, one contemporary, and one biblical, both concerned with soldiers who died in war. The first story is told in the November 26th issue of the Christian Century for last year. It describes Veterans Day, November 11 in Birmingham, Alabama. It was an opportunity for understandable national and civic pride, for a school holiday and an elaborate parade, for a Veterans Day world peace luncheon and the patriotic rally at the municipal auditorium. The celebration ended with a pledge of allegiance to the flag, and that was that. Or was it? The new story has another side to it, I quote, "The real drama of the day unfolded during the noon hour, away from the downtown area at Elmwood cemetery. For over 60 years, the final resting place of the city's aristocracy, outside the main gate some 300 people gathered for a prayer vigil in memory of private first class Bill Terry, killed in action in Vietnam in July. Bill had requested that in the event of his death in the war, he be buried in Elmwood. So his mother could see his grave from the family home nearby, but his request had been denied by the cemetery management. On the sole ground that his skin was the wrong color, black. November 11 was the biggest Veterans Day yet seen in Birmingham, perhaps in the nation, the soldiers marched, the bands played, the politicians made their speeches and Bill Terry's father sat outside the gates of Elm cemetery and wept. Bill Terry died in the service of a democracy. He could not be buried Democratic. Now the other story is from second Samuel, chapter two, our scripture lesson, it tells of a civil war long, long ago For the control of the succession of the throne of Saul, the first king of Israel who had been slain in action against the Philistines. The party which backed Ishbel, Saul's son, was led by Abner, the party which followed David the giant killer was under the command of Joab. Joab defeated Abner in the first trial of strength. And at this point Asahel, the brother of Joab, comes into the picture. He was the youngest son of David's sister, and was famed for his speed. "As swift of foot as a wild gazelle," is how the Bible describes him. He was one of David's 30 heroes, commander of a division in David's army. He decided to kill or capture Abner as the Davidic followers pursued the defeated enemy from the battlefield. He had almost overtaken his quarry when Abner suggested that he ease up and slow down. With the argument that he would rather not kill Asahel, as he could never look Joab, Asahel's brother, in the face again. Asahel persisted, so Abner slew him. And the verse which intrigues me is the one which enumerates the casualties

among David's followers. There lack is they were missing of David servants, 19 men and Asahel, 19 men and Asahel. Now, where was Asahel buried? In the tomb of his father, which was at Bethlehem. Why not? Bethlehem was David's town. And David was Asahel's uncle, two dead soldiers and two cemeteries. These are our two stories in juxtaposition, two dead soldiers and two cemeteries, why the difference? Oh, one answer is obvious, Asahel was top brass. Terry was a private first class, the Bible tells us that as Asahel's mother was David's sister. The newspaper article does not say who Terry's mother is, Asahel was a member of the dominant race. Terry was not, Asahel belonged to the in-group. Terry certainly as a corpse, belonged to an out group, far out, Asahel was an all-Israelite. Terry was not, for most people and all-American. One wonders if the attitude of Birmingham would've been different if Terry had been a brigadier general or even a bird colonel. Or if he'd just been a white private first class? His color was wrong, his rank was wrong. His family tree was wrong, his community status was wrong. He was just a Christian and an American and a soldier who had died in war for his country. But that was not enough to make him persona grata, corpus gratum. For some people in one part of our democratic republic. One would think that a cemetery, as the ante room to heaven or hell would be a place of no discrimination. Is it the Morovians who call a graveyard the city of the equal death? That thought came to my mind some years ago in Salisbury, Salisbury North Carolina, not England. There's a Negro college there. Livingstone college, named for David Livingstone. Scotland's greatest missionary, an African explorer and an opponent of slavery. Now there are both drama and irony in the commemoration of David Livingstone in this neighboring town. Why? Because David Livingstone's eldest son was buried there in Salisbury, before his father knew that such a place existed. Perhaps Robert Livingstone, his father couldn't get along with each other. In despair, the boy fled from Africa, not to Scotland, but to the United States. He had resolved to fight in the civil war. Landing in New York he enlisted in the Northern forces under an assumed name, lest he dishonor his father's reputation. He was wounded near Laurel Hill in Virginia, captured, detained in a prisoner of war camp at Salisbury and died there on December 5th, 1864, age 18. I visited the national cemetery there and asked to see his grave. I was told that the actual grave is unmarked and unknown. If Robert Livingstone had been an officer, the burial site would be known. He was just a private, and his remains are in one of 18 trenches set apart as a common burying ground for ordinary soldiers, the city of the equal dead? David Livingstone's body lies in Westminster Abbey, the historic Valhalla of the late British empire. Now we know the rebuttal in theory, to such discrimination, be the corpse Robert Livingstone or Bill Terry. It's in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's in the creeds and hymns of Judaism and Christianity. It tells us that there can be no love of God without love of his most beloved creature, man. That's how the Dutch catechism puts it. It adds, "The law of love knows no limits. Love never says it is enough." Love never says it is enough, to put it pedantically, the principle of respect for personality in all men is a fundamental, the fundamental Christian social principle. To put it absolutely, Christian love recognizes the infinite worth of the downest man, to put it practically, Christian love means reading statistics with compassion, "Reading statistics, with compassion." That's how the late Bishop Gore put it. Robert Burn summed it all up in seven words. "A man's a man for all that." A man is not an IBM card, not a social security number, not a dog tag. He's a man, a child of God, a comrade, a brother for all that than for all anything else. Is this too highfalutin for us? Too idealistic, too impossible? Then listen to a page or two from a novel, which has just been made into a motion picture for the second time. Last year, Judith Chris listed among the 10 worst movies of 1969. It's James Hilton's, Goodbye, Mr. Chips. Mr. Chips has come out of retirement to become acting headmaster of an English prep school. During the First World War. One of his duties was to read in chapel, the names of old

boys who had been killed in the war. Here are two pages from the book. "On Sundays in chapel it was he who now read out the tragic list, and sometimes it was seen and heard that he was in tears over it. Well, why not? The school said, he was an old man. They might have despised anyone else for the weakness. One day he got a letter from Switzerland, from friends there. It was heavily censored, but conveyed some news. On the following Sunday after the names and biographies of old boys, he paused a moment and then added, 'Those few of you who were here before the war will remember Max Staefel, the German master. He was in Germany visiting his home when war broke out. He was popular while he was here and made many friends. Those who knew him will be sorry to hear that he was killed last week On the Western front.' He was a little pale when he sat down afterward, aware that he had done something unusual. He had consulted nobody about it. No one else could be blamed, later outside the chapel he heard an argument. 'On the Western front?' Chip said, 'Does that mean he was fighting for the Germans?' 'I suppose it does.' 'Seems funny then to read his name out with all the others, after all, he was an enemy.' 'Oh, just one of Chip's ideas I expect, the old boy still has 'em.' Chip's in his room again, was not displeased by the comment. Yes, he still had 'em, those ideas of dignity and generosity that were becoming increasingly rare in a frantic world." Those ideas of dignity and generosity that were becoming increasingly rare in a frantic world, each dead alumnus had his name read out, in that school service, there was no summary sentence, 'There were killed 19 men and Asahel.' Each man, whatever his family, his rank, his prowess, was an Asahel. Some of you're going to Scotland this year, as tourists, as students, as assistant ministers. Visit Iona, that little island off the west coast, where Columba brought Christianity to the Highlands in 563, visit the graveyard, 60 Kings are buried there. 48 are Scottish, eight are Norwegian and four are Irish. Macbeth is interred there. So is Duncan, who Macbeth murdered. There are other folk also, clan chiefs, ecclesiastics. There is about one 20th century grave. If my memory is accurate, that of a Nazi aviator, whose body was washed to shore on Iona in the Second World War, he lies among the Kings. I wonder if anyone knows his name. I wonder if his family ever came over from Germany to stand beside his grave on that foreign holy island. This sermon began with a new story from Birmingham, Alabama, but it concluded with another one from Birmingham. Here it is as recorded in the Durham Morning Herald of January 4th, 1970, and in the Christian century of January 14th, on Saturday, January three, private first class Bill Terry was buried in Elmwood cemetery after a five month legal battle against racial restriction. A federal judge ruled last week that the restrictive clauses in the contracts with other plot owners were illegal. Elmwood did not appeal the decision. Bill Terry lies within sight of the house in which he grew up. His white pastor, father Eugene Farrow said to the congregation, "I hope this burial is a symbol of a new age. This may be the last barrier of discrimination. This is not a time of mourning, it is a time of rejoicing." Then Bill Terry is a contemporary Asahel? No, he probably wouldn't want to be. He probably would rather be Bill Terry, a Roman Catholic Christian, a black American who died in one of his country's wars. He was and is a child of God, he's in that white cemetery because a group of blacks and whites under God and through the law, were able to make a point clear that inner democracy, which owes so much to the Judeo-Christian heritage, a man is a man, is a man. Be he Jew or Christian, black or white, Asahel or Bill Terry. We worshipping in this service know that in Christ, there is no East or West, in him no North or South. So let us affirm that faith by singing it, the hymn is 1, 9, 2. ♪ In Christ there is no East or West ♪ ♪ In Him no South or North ♪ ♪ But one great fellowship of love ♪ ♪ Throughout the whole wide Earth ♪ ♪ In Him shall true hearts everywhere ♪ ♪ Their high communion find ♪ ♪ His service is the golden cord ♪ ♪ Close binding all of mankind ♪ ♪ Join hands then people of the faith ♪ ♪ Whate'er your race may be ♪ ♪ Who serve thy Father lamb of God ♪ ♪ Is surely kin to me ♪ ♪ In Christ now meet both East and West ♪ ♪ In Him

meet South and North ♪ ♪ All Christly souls are one in Him ♪ ♪ Throughout the whole wide Earth ♪ ♪ Amen ♪
(gentle organ music) (congregation singing)

Pastor: Eternal God, giver of every good and perfect gift, who seekest above all thy gifts, to give thyself to us.
Grant that with these token gifts of our hands, we may more fully give ourselves in joyous obedience and
service through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now may the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ be with us all. ♪ Amen ♪